

CTS-HK 550A

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

OSD Review
Completed

State Dept. review
completed

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~
~~EYES ONLY~~

January 20, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN HOLDRIDGE

MORI
C05105117

FROM: Al Haig
SUBJECT: Paris Negotiations

On reading Secretary Laird's memorandum to Secretary Rogers suggesting that a small select group be tasked with reviewing Vietnam negotiations (Tab A) HAK commented, "Let's have it part of the NSC system. We have groups for this purpose. Give it to Sullivan to report to the Senior Review Group."

We have subsequently received Secretary Rogers' reply, which indicates that there is a split between the two Secretaries on this issue (Tab B).

Would you please prepare, on an urgent basis, a memorandum for HAK presenting the views of both Secretaries and your suggestions for resolving the issue. It seems to me that Secretary Rogers has given us a way for killing the Laird suggestion and thus keeping the negotiating effort within the existing NSG framework. One approach would be to let Sullivan know through you that we concur that it is best to keep our efforts within the existing framework.

Attachments

AMH:JTH:mlc 1-20-71

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~~~SENSITIVE~~~~EYES ONLY~~THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

[TS-HR550B]

18 JAN 1971

The Honorable William P. Rogers
Secretary of State
Washington, D. C.

Dear Bill:

My just-completed trip to Paris, Bangkok, and Saigon was, as I have told you, a most rewarding one. I was especially pleased with the full and frank discussions with Ambassadors Bruce and Habib.

Although I am not overly optimistic as a result of these discussions about diplomatic progress on Southeast Asia issues, I do feel we should give further thought to our position in Paris. The President has stated that his Administration will be judged on whether it ends the war in Southeast Asia. I have always interpreted this to apply to direct U. S. involvement.

As you know, the first phase of the Vietnamization program, to relieve U. S. forces of the ground combat responsibilities, will almost be completed by 1 May 1971, when we will be at or below the authorized troop ceiling of 284,000 announced by the President on 20 April 1970. We already are implementing the second phase of the program to turn over responsibility in the air, at sea, and for artillery, logistic and other support activities on the ground. We can and will meet the President's goal of ending direct U. S. involvement, at least by the end of 1972. But to do so sets the toughest kind of Vietnam deadline date. The 1971-1972 period will be exacting in the political and economic realm, as well as that of the military.

With this deadline, it is essential that we now work back from that date and determine all those steps which can be, and reasonably should be, taken to achieve our objective. While Ambassadors Bruce and Habib see little reason for optimism in the Paris meetings, they agree that this does not mean we have explored every option or exhausted every possibility in the negotiations.

Accordingly, I feel that a small, select group should be tasked with reviewing the negotiations to date, with the hope that new proposals and scenarios will emerge that further our objectives and

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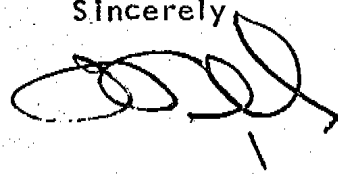
TOP SECRET SENSITIVE EYES ONLY

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have some chance of serious consideration by the other side. The group, in my judgment, should be chaired by Bill Sullivan. I would suggest other members include, and even be restricted to, Phil Habib, George Carver from CIA, Dennis Doolin of my office, General Fred Weyand from MACV, and Dick Smyser of the NSC staff. I would propose that the group meet initially, either here or in Paris, for four or five days later this month or in early February at the latest.

I feel it essential that this be done, and that the review be completed and (hopefully) new proposals developed before the President announces the next redeployment package in mid-April.

Sincerely



cc: Henry Kissinger

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

EYES ONLY

WASHINGTON

January 19, 1971

S/S 7100848

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

Dear Mel:

Thank you for your letter of January 18 proposing that a small group of representatives from interested Departments meet to review new proposals for the Paris negotiations on Viet-Nam. As you know from our discussions of this matter with the President, I am satisfied that we have already made appropriate and constructive proposals which could result in productive negotiations. Nevertheless, I am, of course, sympathetic to the idea of the most thorough canvass of negotiating opportunities in Paris to assure ourselves that no avenue is left unexplored.

However, I am concerned that the sort of meeting you suggest, which would bring together representatives from Paris and Saigon, as well as Washington, might attract unwarranted attention and raise unrequited hopes for progress at a time when such hopes seem very slim. The communists, at this stage, seem to be concentrating on military operations and the chance of exploiting the Vietnamese election campaigns to their advantage. They appear to be very little interested in exploring the thoroughly attractive negotiating proposals which the President put forward on October 7 of last year.

Consequently, rather than bringing in people from the field at this juncture, I would suggest that appropriate representatives here in Washington first examine informally what, if any, proposals for action in Paris may merit further consideration. If this process produces any positive proposals, you and I

The Honorable
Melvin R. Laird,
Secretary of Defense.

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

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can consider what additional action to take.

With this view in mind, I have asked Bill Sullivan to be in touch with Dennis Doolin in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bill Rogers', written in a cursive style.

William P. Rogers

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY